CHAPTER 37:
WHERE THE OGRE
DOES NOT DWELL

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カラミコイ、コイ、カラミコイ。

秋タカ

THANKS FOR HELPING ME OUT BACK THERE.

NWAH!?

WHAT'S THAT GRIN FOR? YOU'RE SO CREEPY.

WELL, MY RIGHT ARM HAD ALL THOSE THINGS GOING THROUGH IT AND I COULDN'T USE MY ABILITIES WELL,

BUT WE WERE ABLE TO KILL THE OGRE BECAUSE YOU TOOK CONTROL OF MY ARM.

OH, COME ON.

YOU WERE BUSY ENOUGH USING YOUR LEFT ARM AND YOUR MOUTH, AND IF IT WOULD'VE BEEN FASTER IF I'D JUST DONE IT MYSELF.

YOU DON'T LIKE BEING A FAILURE EITHER, RIGHT?

WHAT I WANT, AND WHAT I WANT TO GET BACK.

YOU UNDER-STAND

I COULDN'T FORGIVE MYSELF FOR LETTING MY FAMILY DIE.

I KNOW I LOATHED MYSELF FOR BEING A FAILURE BACK THEN.

...

THE HATE IN ME BACK THEN WAS A LOT STRONGER THAN IT IS NOW.

YOU'RE FINALLY NOT A FAILURE ANYMORE.

YEAH.

ACTUALLY, YOU WON'T BE *ABLE* TO SUMMON THAT MANY RATS ANYMORE.

YOU SHOULDN'T USE THAT ABILITY ANYMORE.

BUT THAT SURE WAS A TON OF RATS. WE'RE INVINCIBLE AS LONG AS WE'RE UP AGAINST YOKAI THAT ISN'T AN OGRE, RIGHT?

IN OTHER WORDS, ME.

THE SOURCE OF THAT POWER CAME FROM YOUR NEGATIVE EMOTIONS— A PHYSICAL MANIFESTATION OF YOUR HATRED TOWARDS THE NEKUNI.

HUH? WHY?

AND YOU DON'T HATE YOURSELF ANYMORE.

I PROBABLY WON'T APPEAR IN YOUR DREAMS AFTER THIS.

HEY,

...OKAY.

YOU WERE USING THE RAT CHAINS WELL, TOO.

NOW YOU'LL ONLY BE ABLE TO SUMMON A SMALL NUMBER OF RATS, BUT THE PHYSICAL ENHANCEMENT ABILITY SHOULD SERVE YOU WELL, ESPECIALLY AS YOU WORK TO MAKE YOURSELF STRONGER.

DO YOU THINK WE MADE GRAMPS EAT HIS WORDS?

YEAH.

CAN YOU IMAGINE? THAT TERRIFYING FACE?

EVEN IF WE DID MAKE HIM EAT HIS WORDS, I DON'T THINK HE'D SAY IT. I CAN'T IMAGINE THAT TERRIFYING FACE ADMITTING IT.

WHO KNOWS? GRAMPS IS GRAMPS...

THAT FACE

I THINK HE'LL AT LEAST HAVE A DRINK WITH US.

BUT ONCE WE GROW UP AND SEE HIM ON THE OTHER SIDE,

I HOPE SO.

I GUESS IT'S FROM WHEN HE TOOK CONTROL OF MY RIGHT ARM...

MY RIGHT HAND IS STILL A BIT NUMB.

I WAS NAPPING.

OH.

ZZZ

HP...

I CAN'T FALL BACK INTO THAT TRAP.

I WON'T FORGET WHAT I WENT THROUGH AS I WALLOWED IN SELF-LOATHING BACK THEN.

HUH? ARE YOU ALL GOING SOME-WHERE?

HP...

NOT ME, THOUGH.

I'M HEADED TO THE TWELVE CITY PARK, IN THE CENTER OF THE CITY.

TORAKO'S HOUSE?

HEY, KYOICHI. WE'RE GOING TO THE TORAIWA HOUSE.

IT LOOKS LIKE SOMETHING HAPPENED TO IT WHILE WE WERE FIGHTING AYAKA YESTERDAY.

THE CENTER OF THE CITY?

OH, THAT PARK WHERE THE STONE MONUMENT IS ENSHRINED.

MONSTER...?

A MONSTER APPEARING, THE STONE MONUMENT CRACKING...

AND THE INCIDENT WITH TORAKO... THEY CAN'T BE UNRELATED.

TOYA!? WAS THAT HIM?

OH! THAT'S RIGHT!

THIS SCYTHE...!?

REMEMBERING

OH, THAT'S RIGHT.

WHY WERE YOU WITH HIM LAST NIGHT?

THAT'S A STORY FOR ANOTHER DAY.

TOYA-KUN TOLD ME TO SEND HIS REGARDS TO YOU.

HUH?

DID SOMETHING HAPPEN BETWEEN HER AND MIYAKO?

I'D LIKE TO SPEAK WITH YOUR SISTER AS WELL.

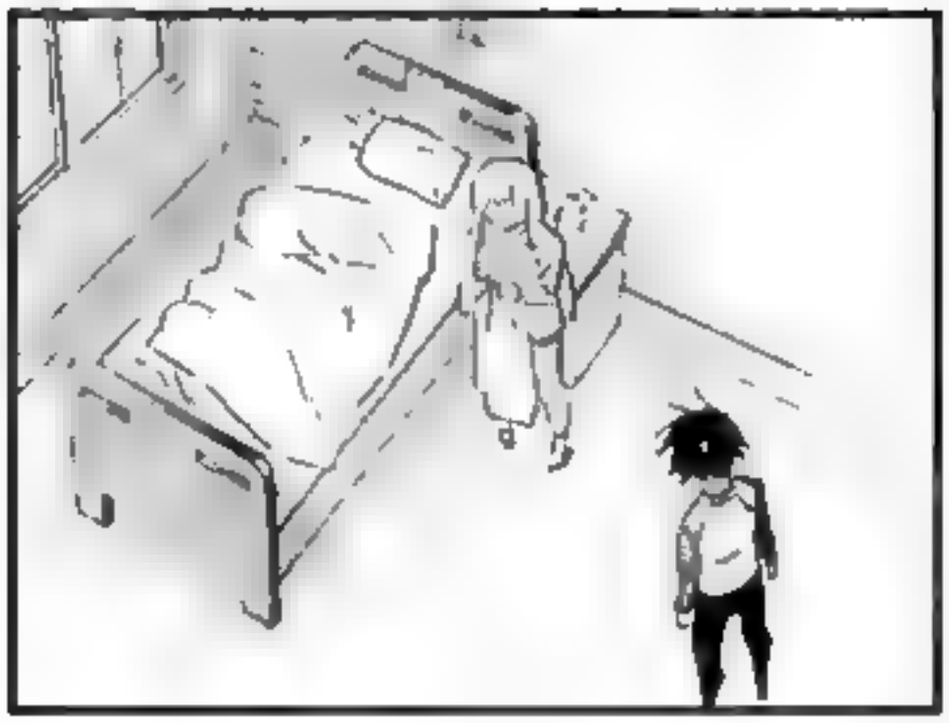
BUT I DON'T REALLY KNOW HER WELL.

MASAKA-SENPAI... SHE'S FRIENDS WITH AYAKA AND I SEE HER ALL THE TIME,

I SHOULD TALK TO HIM SOONER. RATHER THAN LATER...

AND TOYA'S WITH HER... HE SHOULD KNOW SOMETHING ABOUT TURNING INTO YOKAI.

She ran out...



I'M...

WHAT ARE YOU DOING?
はぁ…

YOU'RE SO OVERPRO-TECTIVE!!
YOU NEED TO KEEP YOURSELF WARM, EAT SOMETHING NUTRITIOUS, LIGHT SOME AROMATHERAPY OILS, AND GO TO SLEEP!

AND WHAT, YOU'RE GONNA GO IN YOUR PAJAMAS!? AFTER ALL THAT HAPPENED YESTERDAY?
NO WAY!
FIXIN' TO GO TO TORAKO'S HOUSE.

I HAVEN'T TOLD YA ABOUT IT YET.

BUT NOW THAT EVERYTH.NG'S OUT IN THE OPEN, WHY WOULD SHE STILL BE AT HER HOUSE?

I KNOW TORAKO HAD SOMETHING TO DO WITH THIS INCIDENT,

AND WHY ARE WE INTERESTED IN THE TORAIWA HOUSE ANYWAY?

TORAKO TOLD ME RIGHT BEFORE WE WERE STABBED,

THAT SHE DIDN'T WANNA BE DOIN' IT.

AND THAT THE REASON FOR EVERYTHIN' IS IN THE BASEMENT OF THE TORAIWA HOUSE.

THE BASE-MENT...?

ALL I REMEMBER IS THAT WE WERE STABBED TOGETHER BY SOMETHIN'...

I DIDN'T HAVE A CHANCE TO ASK WHAT WAS IN THE BASEMENT.

IT LOOKS LIKE WE DEFINITELY HAVE TO CHECK OUT THE TORAIWA HOUSE.

THAT DOES SOUND KINDA FISHY...

I'M GUESSING THAT IT HAS SOMETHIN' TO DO WITH HER MOM, THOUGH.

SHE'S MY MOM'S OLDER SISTER.

BUT THERE'S BEEN SOMETHING WEIRD ABOUT HER LATELY SHE HASN'T BEEN ABLE TO GET IN TOUCH WITH HER FOR A COUPLE OF YEARS.

WE DON'T KNOW WHAT'S THERE. I GUESS I SHOULD GO WITH NATSUHO AND THE OTHERS, TOO.

NO!

WHAT ABOUT ME?

I'M THE ONLY ONE WHO'S BEEN TO TORAKO'S PLACE, AND I'D BE SO BORED JUST SLEEPIN'... OOPS, I MEAN-

WHY CAN'T YOU JUST SIT STILL!?

SEE, I KNEW IT!

WATCH-

WAH!

NO, NO, NO!

WHAAAT?

I'LL CALL YOU WHEN WE GET THERE!

KNYAAAAAAH!

*HE'S NOT MAKING A MOVE

WAAAH IT'S RACING AT FULL SPEED!!

—I-CAN'T BELIEVE KYOICHI-SAN IS MAKIN' SUCH A BOLD MOVE, MY HEART ISN'T READY...

...

Uhyoaaaah

Waaaah

My bad!

WHEN SOMETHING LIKE THIS HAPPENS, HE'D USUALLY...

WHAT?

HUH...

Sniff

IS HE HAVING A HEART ATTACK...!?

BUT WHY IS KYOICHI-SAN SO QUIET...!?

WELL, ME BEIN' FROZEN AND NERVOUS IS NORMAL!

STOP...

Hwat?

MAKING ME WORRY...

UM...

AND YET HERE I AM, BEIN' SELFISH...

THAT'S RIGHT, HE PUT HIS LIFE ON THE LINE-TO SAVE ME LAST NIGHT.

GASP!

OH... IF YOU THINK 'BOUT IT,

THAT WAS CLOSE... IF SOMEONE SUDDENLY CAME IN RIGHT NOW, IT'D BE HARD TO TALK OUR WAY OUT OF TH.S ONE...

SEN-PAAAI!

IF SOMEONE CAUGHT US LOOKIN LIKE TH.S.

IT'D BE BAD

DON'T... WORRY ABOUT T...

HUH? SENPAI? WHAT HAP-PENED!?

ON SECOND THOUGHT, AYAKA-SENPAI, I REALLY DON'T THINK YOU SHOULD GO—

BUT JUST LOOK AT YA...

HEY! WHAT ARE YOU LAUGHING AT!? AYAKA!

PFFT-

PFWA-HAHAH!

PFF—

AHA

AHA-HAHA-HAH!

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Huh?

Huh?

NOT TURN MY BACK TO THEM, AND BACK AWAY SLOWLY!!

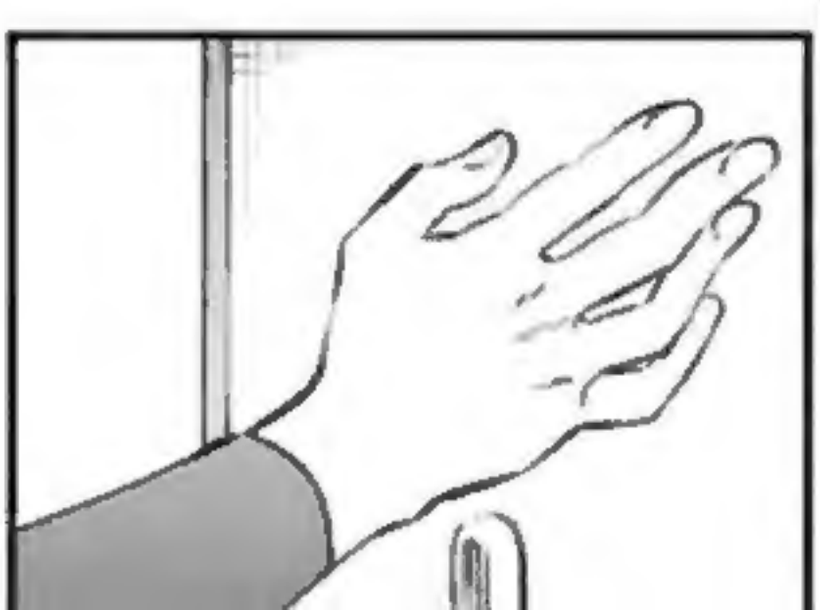
I FEEL LIKE I SHOULDN'T BE HERE...! AT TIMES LIKE THIS... UM, I NEED TO...

THIS MOOD!! I DON'T BELONG HERE!

HAW-AAA-AA!?

-THIS IS HOW YOU ESCAPE FROM A BEAR.

HERE, KYOICHI-SAN.



OKAY.
ALRIGHT, NOW TAKE IT EASY.
HAVE HITSUNO CALL US IF YOU NEED SOME-THING.

UH...

HOW MUCH OF LAST NIGHT DO YOU REMEMBER?

I DON'T REMEM-BER MUCH AT ALL.

BUT I DO REMEMBER A DREAM.

!?

I DON'T NEED TO KNOW YOUR DREAM.

AND... UM, WELL...

I WAS IN HELL FOR A LOOONG TIME AND THEN SUDDENLY, TADAAAAA! AND THERE WAS THIS LIGHT FROM HEAVEN!

I'M GONNA GO NOW.

...AL-RIGHT.

WHAT WAS THAT?

?

ANYWAY, LET'S SAVE IT IN THE LIBRARY.

SAVING

THE KYOICHI LIBRARY IS LOCATED IN AYAKA'S BRAIN, AND CAN RECALL KYOICHI'S FACE WITH 90% CERTAINTY.

IT DOESN'T MATCH ANYTHING FROM MY KYOICHI-SAN LIBRARY DATA.

AND WHAT WAS THAT EXPRESSION KYOICHI-SAN HAD? HMM?

I HOPE...

TORAKO'S OKAY...